
If you believe you are eligible to vote and encounter difficulty registering, please contact the Election Administration office of the Iowa Secretary of State:

Iowa Secretary of State
Statehouse
Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 281-8993 (voice)
(888) SOS VOTE (toll-free)
www.sos.state.ia.us

If the Iowa Secretary of State is unable to help you, or to report a problem, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Voting Section, Rm. 7254 - NWB
Washington, D.C. 20530
(202) 307-2767 (voice)
(800) 253-3931 (toll-free)
(202) 307-3961 (fax)
www.usdoj.gov/crt

This pamphlet is provided for informational purposes only, as an aid to further inquiry. The laws in many states are revised frequently, and may have changed since this pamphlet was issued. It is your responsibility to determine whether you are lawfully eligible to vote, and criminal penalties can result from voting when ineligible or making false statements on a registration form.

Issued December, 2000

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division



Restoring Your Right to Vote



The right to vote is an important civil right in a democracy as well as a civic responsibility, and yet many persons who have been convicted of a crime do not know whether they are eligible to vote. For both federal and state elections, the right to vote is controlled by the law of the state in which you live. Some states restrict the right to vote for persons who have been convicted of a crime. This pamphlet is intended to help you determine whether you are eligible to vote in the state in which you live, and if so, what steps you must take to be permitted to vote.

What law governs whether my felony conviction limits my right to vote?

The impact of a criminal conviction on the right to vote varies widely from state to state. Whether you can vote after being convicted of a crime is determined by the state in which you live, not the state in which you were convicted.

Can I vote while I'm incarcerated in Iowa?

If you are a resident of Iowa, you cannot vote in Iowa elections while you are incarcerated as a result of a felony conviction. If you are a resident of another state who is temporarily incarcerated in Iowa, you may be able to vote by absentee ballot in your home state. You need to consult the law of your home state regarding both criminal convictions and absentee ballots to see if this is a possibility.

I have been released from incarceration. How do I restore my right to vote?

If you were convicted of a felony, then you must obtain a pardon or a restoration of your citizenship from the Governor in order to regain your right to vote. To apply, write to the Governor at the State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319, or telephone (515) 281-5211 for more information.

What if my conviction was for a federal crime or a crime in another state?

The same procedure applies whether you were convicted of a state crime or a federal crime. The Governor of Iowa cannot grant you a pardon on behalf of the federal government or that of another state, but he can still restore your voting rights in Iowa.

If you wish to seek a full pardon for a conviction from another state, you should contact the Governor's office of that state for information on their procedures. If you were convicted of a federal crime, you may contact:

Office of Pardon Attorney
United States Department of Justice
500 First Street, N.W., 4th floor
Washington, D.C. 20530

What happens if I move to another state?

If you move to another state, your right to vote will be controlled by the laws of that state.

What are Iowa's other voter registration requirements?

To vote in Iowa, you must:

- be a U.S. citizen
- be a resident of Iowa
- be at least 18 years old on or before election day
- not claim the right to vote anywhere else
- not currently be judged "mentally incompetent" by a court

When do I need to register to vote?

Registration is available year-round in Iowa, *except* during the 10 days prior to a primary or general election and 11 days before any other election. You may register after the deadline, but your registration will not be effective until after that election. Normally, an application must be received by the deadline in order to be valid for the election. However, if your registration is postmarked at least 15 days before the election, it will be accepted for that election even if it is received after the deadline. Registration is permanent. After you register, you do not have to register again unless you move to a new address.

Where do I go to register?

Registration is available at many places in Iowa, including:

- Office of the County Auditor
- Driver's licenses stations
- Public assistance agencies
- State offices serving people with disabilities
- Some city clerks and school board offices

Voter registration forms may also be distributed by anyone who wants to register others to vote. Forms are available from many sources including:

- Office of the County Auditor
- Office of the Iowa Secretary of State in person, by mail, or at the website www.sos.state.ia.us
- Most US West Direct telephone books
- Most McLeod USA telephone books
- Iowa Income Tax Booklets—even numbered years
- Iowa Voter Guide